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THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION AND ITS APPLICATION TO PEOPLES UNDER COLONIAL OR ALIEN DOMINATION OR FOREIGN OCCUPATION

Written statement* submitted by North South XXI, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 December 2000]

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* This written statement is issued, unedited, as received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.01-10380 (E)

Civil and political rights, detention, torture, independence of the judiciary. Against the sanctions that the people of Iraq have endured for 10 years

1. For 10 years now the people of Iraq have been subject to an embargo that has occasioned numerous infringements of basic human rights, first among them the right to life. Beside the one and a half million victims of Operation "Desert Storm" there have been hundreds of thousands of deaths, especially among children and the elderly, due to malnutrition and problems in obtaining treatment.

To cap it all, British and American planes continue to bombard the country almost every day, destroying economically important sites and causing many civilian casualties.

2. The future of the Iraqi people is in hock to the present. The country's economic infrastructure is severely dilapidated, setting it back by several years. The educational system has sustained heavy damage, and this is hastening the disintegration of the social fabric. Transport and communications have been reduced to a bare minimum, restricting food and medical supplies. The 700 tonnes of depleted uranium that have been unleashed on the population will contaminate the air, water and land for a long time to come. The successive resignations of D. Halliday and H.C. von Sponeck as coordinators of the United Nations humanitarian programme in Iraq say much about a situation imposed by the Security Council at United States urging in which international law is routinely breached.

3. Iraq has withdrawn from Kuwait and accepted the application of the Security Council's resolutions. The only reason for maintaining the embargo is the wish of the United States to find some justification for its continuing presence in a region whose oil reserves lend it strategic value, while seeking to disband certain forces by any means available (see, for example, the Iraq Liberation Act, which provides funds for opposition members who have taken refuge in Britain, and the law passed by the US Congress on 28 September 1998).

4. Whatever the reason for it, the destruction of the Iraqi people is completely contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and all the declarations and covenants concerned with human rights. Quite apart from the infringements of human rights, the use of depleted uranium and the almost daily bombardment of the civilian population are major violations of humanitarian law (for example, article 30 of the 1977 Protocol Additional to the 1949 Geneva Conventions (Protocol I)).

It is thus the duty of the Commission on Human Rights, concerned at the utter genocidal inhumanity of the sanctions against Iraq, to intercede and seek the immediate lifting of the embargo plus an investigation into the damage that unilateral measures and the use of depleted uranium have done to the country. The findings cannot but give rise to compensatory measures and moves to call to account those who have dared to turn an entire people into guinea pigs for military experiments.